



paradise lost?

A review of Queensland Labor Government environmental policies 1998 – 2008



introduction

The Queensland Labor Government celebrated ten years in power on the 13th of June 2008.

During their ten years in Government the protection and ecologically sustainable development of Queensland's superlative natural environment has become a mainstream issue. It now occupies a central place in the consciousness of the community, Government and Industry.

Climate change, water management and the protection of biodiversity are now frequently front page news issues. Government policy and action in response to these themes are consequently under increasing scrutiny.

So it is now timely to review the Labor Government's environmental performance from 1998 to 2008. This is the objective of this report, compiled by The Wilderness Society, WWF-Australia and Queensland Conservation.

As a benchmark, we assess and compare the findings of Queensland's State of the Environment reports from 1999 and 2007. This allows us to track the decline or improvement of environmental quality over much of the period of Labor in Government.

Across the central themes of Climate, Water and Biodiversity, key policy areas have been selected to highlight Labor Government promises and actions. These are the areas that are critical to protecting our environment and those watched most closely by The Wilderness Society, WWF-Australia and Queensland Conservation.

The analysis is presented in a table format and has been scored using a "traffic light" colour system: green indicates policy success which has improved environmental conditions; amber represents areas where progress has stalled; and red denotes policy failure, where the environment is in decline as a result of Government action or inaction.

To end the report we have also included a timeline of the key 'Successes' and 'Failures' of Queensland environmental policy over the past 10 years, completing the picture of Labor's record in Government.

Summary of findings

When Labor came to power in Queensland in 1998 it was confronted with a raft of important environmental issues requiring immediate action. These included out of control land clearing operations, proposals to woodchip native forests, escalating public concern about climate change and antiquated laws and policies in respect to water management and river conservation.

Queensland's first *State of the Environment* report was released by the Queensland Government in 1999. It found that the Queensland environment was in a state of deterioration: "*inappropriate land use practices have caused the degradation of land, vegetation and biodiversity and appear to be unsustainable*" and "*most of the State's river systems and aquifers have been adversely affected to some degree*".

Tens years on, despite some notable successes in the first five to six years of government, including the decision to phase out broadscale land clearing, the general health of Queensland's environment continues to deteriorate. The timeline highlights a deterioration in performance since 2005.

"In 2007, water security, drought and cleaner energy have become dominant issues of community concern and public policy debate, the consequence of increasingly compelling evidence of climate change"

State of the Environment Queensland 2007

"The average Queensland resident has an ecological footprint of 7.19 global hectares (gha), nearly three and a half times higher than the global average"

State of the Environment Queensland 2007

Of the twenty-two key policy areas assessed, only two are considered to be an overwhelming policy success, nine policy areas indicate some progress has been made and a further eleven are assessed as policy failures.

On this basis, we conclude that the Government is pursuing a policy agenda which takes us towards an increasingly impoverished environment for future generations. The alternative Government for Queensland – the Liberal-National Coalition – whilst showing hints of improvement in their approach to the environment, has an extensive record of advocating for clearly unsustainable and retrograde environmental policies.

Queensland is in desperate need of leadership and renewed action to protect our irreplaceable environment. We need a Government that is willing to generate innovative, immediate and long-term solutions to our environmental predicament. 2008 will either be the turning point where our political leaders take up the challenge to create a brighter future for Queensland, or where they fail future generations by choosing to do much of the same.

Climate

Climate change is the most significant threat facing the planet today. Queensland will be hard hit by rising temperatures and rainfall reduction. Moreover, our economy will need to respond and innovate to the realities of a carbon restrained future. The decision to end remnant broadscale land clearing in 2004 reduced Queensland's carbon footprint significantly. However, this has now been offset more recently by the dramatic rise in emissions from the energy and transport sectors, and the Government's inability to provide meaningful support for renewable energies. Queensland's per capita greenhouse gas emissions are now among the highest in the world.

Water

Despite some progress with water reform and wild river protection, Queensland's water assets are under serious pressure. Most (80%) of our major rivers flowing to the Great Barrier Reef breach water quality guidelines. We are losing wetlands at a rate of about 7000 hectares per year and intensive development on the east coast of the state threatens our rivers and marine environment. Dam building is now out of control, with thirteen major water infrastructure projects slated for Queensland. No other Australian state is pursuing such a massive dam building agenda. This is a major backwards step for the Government.

Biodiversity

The Labor Government's decision to end broadscale land clearing of remnant vegetation was of great environmental significance. But the *State of the Environment Queensland 2007* concludes that the health of biodiversity in the state continues to be in decline. There is still no biodiversity conservation plan for Queensland and regrowth vegetation is largely unprotected. Furthermore, ambitious efforts to protect native forests, Cape York Peninsula and to expand the National Parks and Protected Areas system remain outstanding and suffer from either a lack of funding or political will.

climate

Climate change is the most significant threat facing the planet today. As carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases continue to be rapidly released into the atmosphere, the problem is escalating out of control.

“The Great Aerial Ocean” is the name the famous biologist Alfred Wallace gave to our atmosphere. It eloquently describes the global connectedness of the system that has regulated the temperatures on the planet for billions of years and has given rise to the development and maintenance of life. It plays a lead role in dictating our seasons, our rainfall patterns and the very nature of our environment.

Queensland is fondly known as the “Sunshine State” due to its agreeable weather. It is the global patterns and nuances of the atmosphere that greatly influence our abundant sunshine and particular weather patterns. The El Nino/La Nina events for instance – representing changes in atmospheric and oceanic conditions in the Pacific Ocean – are well know global patterns that greatly affects weather conditions in Queensland.



The State of our climate

The world is quickly awakening to the human impacts on “The Great Aerial Ocean”, arising from our addiction to fossil fuels and the release of other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. Our climate is now heating up fast.

Queensland is certainly not immune to this global problem. We have already seen a mean annual temperature increase in this state of 1.0°C from 1910 to 2006 [1]. Mean annual temperatures are projected to increase by a further to 1.0°C – 6.0°C by 2070, with rainfall likely to decrease as a result by 15% over the next 20 years and 40% by 2070 [2]. Under certain scenarios, the average number of days over 35°C in Brisbane will double by 2030 and will increase six fold by 2070. In Townsville and Cairns, the increase will be from 2-3 days presently to as many as 76 days per year by 2070 [3].

The climate change threat to Queensland’s natural environment and way of life is severe. Icons such as the Great Barrier Reef are already showing signs of stress. A 2°C rise in sea temperatures will cause widespread coral bleaching and will jeopardise the survival of the Reef [4].

The *State of the Environment Queensland 1999* said that “Queensland’s emissions in 1995 were ... approximately 21 percent of the national total; emissions have increased by 19 percent since 1990” [5].

Since then, the historic decision by the Labor Government to end broad scale land clearing in 2004 has led to greenhouse gas emission reductions of about 26%. However, this reduction has been offset by a dramatic rise in energy (+26%) and transport emissions (+19%) [6].

According to the *State of the Environment Queensland 2007*, “Queensland’s greenhouse gas emissions have increased by 5% from 1999 levels and are among the highest in the world on a per capita basis. In 2004, the state’s greenhouse gas emissions represented about 28% of Australia’s net emissions” [7]. The report attributes high per capita emissions to a “reliance on fossil fuels for transport of freight over large distances and the use of coal for electricity generation to support its energy intensive industry sector” [7].

What has the Labor Government done to stop the threat of climate change?

Footnotes

- [1] State of the Environment Queensland 2007. p.48.
- [2] Preston B.L and Jones R.N. 2006. *Climate Change Impacts on Australia and the Benefits of Early Action to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions*. CSIRO, Victoria.
- [3] Queensland Government. 2005. *Climate Smart Adaptation Discussion Paper*.

- [4] IPCC. 2007. *Climate Change 2007*. Cambridge Press, Cambridge.
- [5] State of the Environment Queensland 1999. Chapter 2.3.
- [6] State of the Environment Queensland 2007. p.58
- [7] State of the Environment Queensland 2007. p.ix

“Queensland’s greenhouse gas emissions have increased by 5% from 1999 levels and are among the highest in the world on a per capita basis. In 2004, the state’s greenhouse gas emissions represented about 28% of Australia’s net emissions”

State of the Environment Queensland 2007

Assessment of 10 years of policy on climate change

Key Policy Area	Key Promises	Key Actions	Commentary
Statewide Greenhouse Gas emission reduction target	2007: promise that Queensland “would play its part” in meeting national target of 60% below 2000 levels by 2050.	There is currently no state-based 2020 or 2050 target. Queensland has instead publicly supported the national target of 60% reduction of 2000 levels by 2050.	Queensland’s emissions continue to increase. The current national target is not high enough to prevent the Great Barrier Reef from wide scale bleaching and destruction.
Renewable energy	2007: target set at 10% of energy to be produced renewable and low emission sources by 2020, pledge to create \$50 million Renewable Energy Fund and \$300 Climate Change Fund. 2008: promise to create Solar Bonus Scheme (feed-in tariff).	The renewable energy target has not been legislated, but the feed-in-tariff for solar panels has though this is based on a net rather than gross scheme (therefore with little impact on investment).	Despite the commitments, Queensland is well behind other states in investment and support for renewable energy, with one of the lowest rates of renewable use in Australia. The renewable energy fund is worth \$50 million while the clean coal fund is worth \$900 million.
Protecting vegetation	1999: commitment within the Vegetation Management Act to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.	Action has been taken to protect remnant vegetation, but there are significant ‘exemptions’ for some activities and no protection for regrowth vegetation.	There are about 14 million hectares of vegetation (primarily regrowth) in Queensland not protected from land clearing.
Controlling fossil fuel industry and shifting to low emission fuels	2000: promise to mandate for 13% Gas scheme. 2006: \$300 million dedicated to fund the development of clean coal technologies, with \$600 million levy from coal industry to add.	Gas scheme increased to 18% in 2007. In 2007, the Government passed retrospective laws to protect Xstrata Coal after Queensland Conservation took legal action. The \$600 million levy is offset in 2008 Budget by a reduction in royalties (separate to new export royalty).	In 2006 coal production greatly accelerated with 28 new coal mines firmly on the cards, with little consideration of polluter pays principle. A significant percentage of coal royalties should be set aside for climate change mitigation and adaptation. Clean coal technology is unlikely to play a role before 2020.
Climate friendly transport	1998 - now: ongoing promises to implement TravelSmart projects (based on voluntary action) across the state, as well as some public transport infrastructure and a Regional Cycling network plan (2005-2026).	TravelSmart projects have been rolled out in some communities in Queensland, but no meaningful action has been taken to ensure the emission reductions necessary. The Labor Government has instead said they will follow the national lead on a national trading scheme.	Funding for roads and petrol subsidies far outweighs funding for public transport. There is no strategy to shift freight from roads to rail despite freight being one of the Queensland’s major GHG emitters. A shift to rail could reduce transport greenhouse gas emissions by up to 75%.
Energy efficiency standards	2006: promise to implement sustainable housing code and 2007: \$55 million Energy Saving Fund for businesses. 2008: promise to implement “ClimateSmart Home Service”.	The Sustainable Housing Code is operational and includes phase out of electric hot water systems, though doesn’t cover existing dwellings. Home rebates accessible to minority of Queensland homes.	The Sustainable Housing code does not include a minimum thermal standard. Queensland has not implemented the national 5 star thermal building code and is well behind NSW and Victoria’s 5 star Basix system.
Long-term plan for action on Climate Change	2007: promise to implement “ClimateSmart 2050” plan.	The ClimateSmart 2050 plan replaced the “Queensland Greenhouse Strategy”.	ClimateSmart 2050 is being reviewed. An issues paper is due for release in July 2008.
Controlling broad scale land clearing of remnant vegetation	2004: promise to phase out broadscale clearing of remnant native vegetation by December 2006.	In December 2006, broadscale remnant land clearing of remnant native vegetation ended.	The decision to end broadscale land clearing of remnant vegetation is largely responsible for Australia meeting its Kyoto targets.

■ Successful policy ■ Progress stalled ■ Failed policy

water

Water is critical to our environment. From the wild rivers of Cape York, to the vast Channel Country floodplains and including the Great Barrier Reef lagoon – without natural water flows these iconic places are at risk.



Our rivers have been described as the arteries of the landscape, distributing fresh water and nutrients for nature and people. This includes vast underground water sources such as the Great Artesian Basin. Connected to our continental arteries are our wetlands, covering 13 million hectares. Queensland's wetlands filter water and pollutants and provide essential habitat for migratory birds from around the world and other important species.

Our rivers also sustain our marine waters, including the productive fisheries of the Gulf of Carpentaria and Moreton Bay and of course the Great Barrier Reef with its wonderful array of corals, fishes, sharks and turtles. Keeping these jewels healthy makes economic sense – the Reef alone is worth over \$5 billion annually [1].

The State of our Water

As Queensland's population grows rapidly, so too do our impacts on rivers, wetlands and oceans. As climate change modifies rainfall across Queensland, the health of our water assets hangs in the balance.

Dams, and the land-use that follows, threaten our waterways, cutting off natural flows and seriously jeopardising the health of aquatic ecosystems [2]. The *State of the Environment Queensland 1999* said that "human activity over the past 200 years has had a very significant impact on both the quality and quantity of Queensland water resources. Most of the State's river systems and aquifers have been adversely affected to some degree" [3]. It

highlighted rapid loss of wetlands, increasing damage from dams, reef pollution and over-used groundwater.

Unfortunately, the *State of the Environment Queensland 2007* shows that little has improved. Many of our rivers continue to be threatened by "land clearing, plantation forestry, irrigated and non irrigated cropping, animal production, mining, dredging and extractive activities" [4]. Groundwater is still overused [5], 7000 hectares of wetlands (and their bird life) are lost each year [6], and 80% of rivers draining to the Reef breach pollution guidelines [7].

After initially setting a solid legal and pricing platform for sustainable water and river management, the Labor Government has lost its way by turning the clock back to a massive dam building agenda. Thirteen major water infrastructure projects are now being planned. Dams are susceptible to drought, are hugely expensive and divert attention from tackling chronic water inefficiency, particularly in farming – which at over 60% of water use is easily the largest single water using sector.

Our marine waters, such as Moreton Bay and the Great Barrier Reef, continue to be threatened by unsustainable fishing. The Great Sandy Marine Park offers little real protection for marine life, and trawling continues in large areas of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, catching an estimated 12 tonnes of by-catch for every tonne of prawns. Dugong, turtles and sharks are currently threatened by proposals to strengthen fishing rights in their habitats.

What has the Labor Government done to tip the balance the right way for our water assets?

Footnotes

- [1] Access Economics. 2005. *Measuring the Economic and Financial Value of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park*. GBR Marine Park Authority, Townsville.
 [2] See Bunn S.E and Arthington A.H. 2002. *Basic Principles and Ecological Consequences of Altered Flow Regimes for Aquatic Biodiversity*. *Environmental Management* Vol. 30:4, pp.492 – 507.
 [3] State of the Environment Queensland 1999. Chapter 4.3.
 [4] State of the Environment Queensland 2007. p.157.

- [5] For example see CSIRO. 2007. *Water Availability in the Border Rivers*. CSIRO, Canberra.
 [6] For example see Nebel et al. 2008. Long-term trends of shorebird populations in eastern Australia and impacts of freshwater extraction. *Biological Conservation* Vol. 141: 4, pp.971 – 980.
 [7] Prange J. et al. 2007. *Great Barrier Reef Water Quality Protection Plan, Annual Marine Monitoring Report*. GBRMPA.

"Freshwater is scarce in much of Queensland. Human activity since European settlement has had adverse impacts on the quantity and quality in many rivers systems, aquifers and reservoirs"

State of the Environment Queensland 2007

Assessment of 10 years of policy on water

Key Policy Areas	Key Promises	Key Actions	Commentary
Protecting the Great Barrier Reef	2001: promise to reduce Reef pollution. 2003: promise to implement Reef water quality protection plan with Federal Government.	Progress has been very slow and the latest 2008 budget offered little to protect the Reef.	The Great Barrier Reef is one of the world's greatest natural assets yet intensive agricultural and urban development on the east coast continues to take precedent over the health of the Reef and 65,000 tourism and other reef-dependent jobs. 80% of major rivers draining to the Reef breach national water quality guidelines.
Protecting the marine environment	1998: promise to establish a network of marine protected areas across the entire coast of Queensland.	Moreton Bay rezoning underway, border-to-border marine parks not achieved. Great Sandy Marine Park provided little conservation. Proposal to strengthen fishing rights in shark, dugong and turtle habitats. Much policy reform has been left to the Commonwealth, despite some earlier action on fisheries reform.	The Government appears to prefer to protect the short term interests of the fishing sector to the long term interests of tourism and our world-class marine environment. Fishing pressure is overwhelming conservation measures for some fisheries, such as inshore finfish. Protection and recovery planning efforts for marine turtles and dugong are inadequate.
Protecting rivers from new dams and weirs	2000: Legislated to prioritise demand management over dams. 2004: promised water efficiency in place of dams. 2006: massive dam building agenda announced.	13 new major dam projects planned for the east coast of Queensland including Traveston, Nathan, Connors River and Nullinga dams.	Before the SEQ water crisis, the Labor Government saw dams as a bad solution to water problems. This has now changed dramatically with the adoption of the nation's biggest dam building agenda.
Restoring degraded waterways	1998 - now: promise to prioritise water reform, including restoring health of degraded rivers and protecting high conservation value rivers. 2003: promise to attempt to buy-back of Cubbie Station cotton farm for environmental flows.	Introduced <i>Water Act</i> in 2000 and now water planning has been completed for much of the state. Cubbie Station buy back was unsuccessful, as with efforts to restore the health of many degraded rivers. Water available for irrigation in Gulf rivers and Warrego River increased in 2007.	Queensland has a good water planning framework however detailed research and community concerns are often over-ridden by perceived political imperatives such as building dams. Many river basins are in steady decline due to increased and unsustainable water resource development allocation and the expansion of coal mining and irrigated agriculture.
Water recycling and water efficiency in urban and rural settings	1999 - now: promise to implement Rural Water Use Efficiency Initiative 2007: promised to recycle water for urban use in SEQ and increase urban efficiency.	SEQ urban water recycling and efficiency programs progressing well but have not been extended to other urban areas. There are no statewide or regional mandatory efficiency targets for industry and agriculture.	Only 4.5% of irrigation properties in Queensland have Land and Water Management plans which are designed to promote efficient water use. The Labor Government is also relaxing important water saving targets in SEQ after modest rains.
Protecting the Great Artesian Basin (GAB)	1999 - now: GAB Sustainability Initiative (GABSI) announced to improve water management.	GABSI is rehabilitating bores and building piping to save water.	Unsustainable amounts of water are still being released in the GAB despite chronic lack of hydrologic data. The piping program has taken water to formerly areas remote from water, impacting on remote wildlife habitat.
Protecting wild rivers and wetlands	2004: promised protection of 19 wild rivers, which includes significant wetland protection. 2004: promised new planning and development assessment approaches to protect wetlands by August 2007. 2006: promise to employ up to 100 Indigenous Wild River Rangers to look after wild rivers.	<i>Wild Rivers Act</i> passed in 2005. Six out of 19 rivers have now been protected. No rivers on Cape York Peninsula have been declared. There has been good 10 year protection for the Cooper, Paroo and Georgina-Diamantina Rivers through water resource plans, but most wetlands across Queensland remain unprotected. 20 Wild River Ranger positions have been delivered.	In 2005 the Labor Government introduced world-leading river protection legislation. Since 2006 the momentum has slowed significantly with the majority of wild rivers remaining unprotected. Wetlands can be protected by the Wild Rivers initiative or through Queensland's water planning process. However, most wetlands can still be pumped down to near empty on existing water entitlements. Queensland needs a statewide wetlands strategy to close this loophole. Only four Ramsar wetlands exist in Queensland.

■ Successful policy ■ Progress stalled ■ Failed policy

biodiversity

Biodiversity is the rich pool of life on Earth – the diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems. Queensland has some of the world’s greatest biodiversity wealth. Almost half of Queensland’s species are found nowhere else in the world and we have more native species than any other state [1]. This includes 80% of Australia’s native birds (594 species), 70% of its native mammals (210 species), and just over half of its native reptiles (429 species) and frogs (114 species) [1]. New species are still being discovered.

Queensland is lucky to have some of the most fascinating ‘critters’ on the planet - koalas, cassowaries, rock wallabies, tree-kangaroos, hairy-nosed wombats, humpback whales and glossy-black cockatoos. Yet many are threatened with extinction. We have already lost thirty species forever [2]. More will go unless something far more substantial is done to redress the impacts of the biggest development boom in our history.

The future of our biodiversity depends on our ability to protect core special areas and maintain ecological processes across the entire Queensland landscape. This means investing in a large Protected Area system, tackling climate change, and protecting our waterways and forests, as well as engaging the extensive ecological knowledge of Indigenous people and other land managers to protect our environment across Queensland.

The State of our Biodiversity

Since European settlement, Queensland’s biodiversity has sharply declined. Climate change poses another severe threat, and combined with other pressures, nature now has even less room to adapt and survive.

The *State of the Environment Queensland 1999* found that “clearing of native ecosystems is the factor contributing most to the loss of biodiversity in Queensland. Since European settlement, more than half of Queensland’s original 117 million hectares of woody vegetation has been cleared” and that, “the factor contributing most to the loss of biodiversity in Queensland has been and continues to be the destruction of native habitat by broadscale land clearing” [3]. Clearing peaked at a staggering 757 000 hectares in 1999 [4].

As the result of strong action by the Queensland Government, broadscale land clearing of remnant forests and woodlands largely ended in 2006, protecting approximately 20 million hectares from the bulldozer and removing at least one major threat to biodiversity. This was a significant and positive change in direction for Queensland.

But the state of our biodiversity will only improve if we also act on other threats. Despite the land clearing decision, the *State of the Environment Queensland 2007* found that “biodiversity loss and decline in Queensland is continuing” and that “the major pressures on the state’s biodiversity include the loss, modification, degradation and fragmentation of native habitat, competition from introduced plant and animal species, and climate change. The rate of habitat loss has risen during the past decade” [5]. Intensive coastal development is also having an impact.

Landscape vegetation in an area twice the size of Tasmania is still largely unprotected (primarily regrowth), and since 1999 Queensland’s Protected Area estate has grown by just 0.8% to 4.8% of the state at present. This is well under the current national average of 8.3% [6], although important areas have been afforded protection through the South East Queensland Regional Forest Agreement and through the Cape York Tenure Resolution process.

What direction has the Labor Government set for the future of our biodiversity?

Footnotes

- [1] Queensland State of the environment Report 2007. p.238.
 [2] Queensland Environment Protection Agency. *Extinct in the wild*. http://www.epa.qld.gov.au/nature_conservation/wildlife/threatened_plants_and_animals/extinct_in_the_wild/ (12/06/08)
 [3] Queensland State of the environment Report 1999. Chapter 7.3.

- [4] DNRW. 2006. *Land Cover Change in Queensland 2003-04*, SLATS Report. Brisbane.
 [5] Queensland State of the environment Report 2007. p.238.
 [6] Sattler P.S and Taylor M.F.J. 2008. *Building Nature’s Safety Net*. WWF-Australia Report, WWF-Australia, Sydney.

“Biodiversity loss and decline in Queensland is continuing ... The rate of habitat loss has risen during the past decade”

State of the Environment Queensland 2007

Assessment of 10 years of policy on biodiversity

Key Policy Areas	Key Promises	Key Actions	Commentary
Statewide Biodiversity Strategy	1998: promise to develop a ‘State Conservation Strategy’ consistent with the National Strategy for the Conservation of Australia’s biological diversity.	A State Conservation Strategy is still to be developed or implemented, although in 2007 the State Rural Leasehold Land Strategy contained a commitment to improved environmental management on leasehold lands.	Very little real progress has been made towards the development of a State Biodiversity or Conservation Plan.
Coastal development	2002: pledge to implement State Coastal Management Plan. 2008: promise to review above plan.	Approval or rubber stamping of council approvals to permanently damage coastlines with inappropriate development at False Cape, Airlie Beach and elsewhere.	The coastal zone is suffering from rapid industrial and urban expansion, causing the loss of critical habitat. Queensland has planning tools to plan for biodiversity protection on a regional basis, but they haven’t yet been used to effect.
Protecting Cape York	1998 - now: promises include compiling the case towards World Heritage listing of appropriate areas on Cape York Peninsula and a commitment of more than \$25 million on acquisitions of Cape York lands of high conservation value.	Since 1998, a number of properties have been purchased on Cape York, totaling about 1.6 million hectares for future conservation protection. <i>Cape York Peninsula Heritage Act 2007</i> passed in 2007.	The protection of Cape York Peninsula remains a work in progress. Achievements include the acquisition of 1.6 million hectares of land for future conservation protection, the protection of the dunefields of Shelburne Bay from sand mining and a preliminary assessment of the World Heritage values of the region. The <i>Cape York Peninsula Heritage Act 2007</i> also promises joint management of National Parks and a process to identify an Area of International Conservation Significance to form the basis of a future World Heritage area.
Protecting native forests	1998 – now: a range of promises including the protection of native forests in South East Queensland and in the Western Hardwoods region.	In 1999 425 000 hectares of native forests in south east Queensland were protected and in 2006 the government announced its intention to protect 1 million hectares of Western hardwood forests.	The SEQ Regional Forest Agreement was a major achievement with support from conservationists and the timber industry. However, the Western Hardwoods process, while reaching some milestones, has not delivered the promised protection of 1 million hectares of state forests as National Parks and Conservation Reserves.
Invasive weeds and pest animals	1998 – now: promises to implement Queensland Weeds Strategy and Pest Offensive program.	<i>Land Protection Act 2002</i> introduced to take action on weeds and pests. Gamba grass – a particularly invasive species – was recently declared a weed.	Despite various programs and legislation, Queensland still gains at least 10 weed species a year costing around \$600 million annually. Invasive ants, feral pigs and wild dogs in particular have become serious problems for biodiversity.
National Parks and Protected Areas	1998: promises to expand the National Park estate to 5% and create a network of marine parks across the entire coastline of the State. 2004: pledge to provide \$5 million to acquire freehold blocks to protect the Daintree rainforest. 2008: promise to expand National Parks by 50% and to double all Protected Areas by 2020.	Parks and reserves have grown, but only in limited areas, and not in poorly protected bioregions including the Gulf of Carpentaria and the Channel Country. The commitment to create border to border marine parks has not been achieved, while the Daintree buy-back program has been largely successful.	In 2008, the centennial year of National Parks for the state, Queensland had the lowest proportion of land area and threatened species habitats protected of all the states and territories. The recent commitment to expand parks, whilst a positive move, is based on an unproven funding model linked to development and carbon offsets. Despite earlier commitments, the Labor Government has allowed horse riding in new National Parks in SEQ.
Controlling broadscale land clearing of remnant vegetation	2004: promise to phase out broadscale clearing of remnant native vegetation by December 2006.	In December 2006, broadscale land clearing of remnant native vegetation largely ended.	The decision to end broadscale land clearing of remnant vegetation is the most significant environment decision in Queensland’s history. It protected 20 million hectares of forests and woodlands from land clearing and delivered substantial biodiversity, land management and carbon storage benefits.

■ Successful policy ■ Progress stalled ■ Failed policy

The key 'successes' and 'failures' of the Labor Government

1998 - 2008

Successes

Failures

- 1998 -

- 425 000 hectares of forests in SEQ protected under Regional Forest Agreement, and logging of old growth forest banned
 - Endangered vegetation protected from landclearing on freehold land through Vegetation Management Act 1999

- 1999 -

- Government supports construction of the Nathan Dam

- 2000 -

- Cooper Creek catchment afforded 10 years protection in water resource plan
- Enacted The Water Act 2000 to establish one of Australia's best platform for water management
- Announced 13% Gas Scheme, creating an early incentives to switch away from coal-fired electricity

- 2001 -

- Required turtle excluder devices, effort reduction and closures ocean-bottom trawling reforms

- 2002 -

- State Coastal Management Plan released, banning new canal estates (but allowing old ones)

- 2003 -

- Mining leases on Shelburne Bay of Cape York cancelled
- Agreement signed with NSW to protect the Paroo River, which is also afforded 10 years protection in water resource plan
 - Sea cages rejected for Moreton Bay
 - Reduced take of Coral Trout and other species within the Coral Fin Fish Management Plan
- Agreed with Federal Government to 'halt and reverse' reef pollution, with many actions due by 2005

- Pledge to build Burnett River (Paradise) Dam
- Failed attempt to buy back Cubbie Station and release water into the Murray Darling System

- 2004 -

- Legislation passed in Qld Parliament creating a rapid phase out of broad scale tree clearing in Queensland, celebrated by conservationists as the biggest single win for conservation in Australia
- Government attempts (but fails) to buy back Cubbie Station to return environmental flows to the Condamine-Balonne system
- Georgina-Diamantina afforded 10 years protection in water resource plan
- Put up \$5 million to secure land for conservation in the Daintree rainforest
- Qld Greenhouse Strategy puts focus on climate-specific science and impacts and establishes a Climate Adaptation Program

- Government attacks Commonwealth over impacts on the fishing industry associated with the protection of the Great Barrier Reef
- Government fails to act quickly to eradicate an outbreak of the highly invasive African fish tilapia in a tributary of the Burdekin River, which starts to spread through the whole catchment in 2005

- 2005 -

- Wild Rivers Act introduced to protect free flowing rivers
 - Complementary zoning of the Great Barrier Reef Coast Marine Park

- Reef pollution reforms delayed
- Failure to protect Reef coast wetlands despite commitments made in return for Commonwealth funding
- Condamine-Balonne Water Resource Plan favours cotton irrigation over environmental flows
- Great Sandy Straits Management Plan protects only 4% of this tourism jewel
- Failure to protect SEQ's koalas, despite evidence of declines from dog attacks and car-related deaths

Successes

Failures

- 2006 -

- First six wild rivers protected and Indigenous Wild River Rangers announced to protect wild river values
- Sustainable housing code released requiring better house design and water and energy efficient appliances as standard
- Finalised the Douglas Shire planning scheme to protect the Daintree rainforests by controlling development

- Approved False Cape and failed to intervene to prevent other dubious coastal developments
- Proposed massive development of Townsville Port
- Traveston and Wyaralong Dams announced for SEQ
- Election promises includes massive dam building agenda for the east coast of the state
- Coal mining greatly accelerated: 8 new mines, 2 under construction, 10 advanced, 18 new projects
- Horse riding permitted in new National Parks in SEQ
- Breached commitment to create border-to-border Marine Parks
- Forestry code introduced which fails to protect rainforest under-storey and other sensitive forest areas

- 2007 -

- Introduced Cape York Peninsula Heritage Act to help progress World Heritage for Cape York, as well as jointly managed National Parks (between State and Traditional Owners)

- Government announces study into a 1200km pipeline from Burdekin Basin to SEQ and for the "Bradfield Scheme" to divert water from Northern Australia to the Murray-Darling Basin
- Commitment to dramatically increase water extraction for intensive agriculture in the Gulf and Mitchell Basins
- Proposal to intensify use in areas susceptible to land degradation and reef pollution with Urannah Dam
- Passed retrospective laws to protect Xstrata Coal after Queensland Conservation took legal action
- Draft Far North Queensland Water Supply Strategy prioritises Nullinga Dam
- Insufficient support for renewable energy - \$50 million compared to \$900 million for clean coal

- 2008 -

- Commitment to make Tugun Desalination Plant carbon neutral.
- Promise to increase National Parks by 50% and double all protected areas by 2020

- Plans for a dam on Baffle Creek revealed
- Treasury states the 2020 emissions target should prioritise the coal industry over the climate
- Budget fails to match Federal commitments to reduce Reef pollution
- Budget provides no new funding for climate mitigation
- EPA restructured, leading to a decline in regional representation and decision making capacity
- Proposal to strengthen fishing rights in shark, turtle and dugong habitats, most within Reef waters
- At National Parks centenary, Queensland has lowest percentage of land protected in Australia
- Solar Bonus scheme introduced but flawed with net instead of gross tariff structure
- Queensland Water Commission releases 50 year water vision based upon building up to 6 desalination plants and increasing water consumption by 100 litres per day in SEQ
- Government flags breaching emphatic commitments to protect Australia's third most diverse bioregion from urban sprawl in SEQ

credits

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Graphic design

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Printing

by Kwik Kopy.

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